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THREE INDICTED ON CONSPIRACY AND OBSCENITY CHARGES

Defendants Sold Rape/Torture Videos on Internet

United States Attorney Jane J. Boyle announced that three defendants, Clarence Thomas Gartman, a/k/a Tom Gartman, Brent Alan McDowell, and Lou Anthony Santilena have been charged with various offenses related to their operation of a business that sold obscene videos on the Internet.

Clarence Thomas Gartman, age 33, and Brent Alan McDowell, age 35, were charged in all four counts of the indictment which was returned late yesterday by a federal grand jury in Dallas. Each was charged with one count of Conspiracy to Distribute Obscene Materials, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371; two counts of Transportation of Obscene Matter and Aiding and Abetting, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1465 and 2(a); and one count of Mailing Obscene Matter, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1461 and 2(a). Defendant Lou Anthony Santilena, age 30, was also charged with one count of Conspiracy to Distribute Obscene Materials and one count of Mailing Obscene Matter.

Defendants Gartman and McDowell are U.S. citizens residing in Canada. Federal authorities are in the process of seeking their return to Dallas. Defendant Santilena is a resident of Henderson, Nevada, and will be required to face the charges here in Dallas.

According to the indictment, beginning in 1998, Gartman and McDowell maintained a collection of sites on the Internet, including a web site named "forbiddenvideos.com." Santilena joined the operation in 2002. The web sites were used to advertise and distribute obscene video tapes, CDs, DVDs, and streaming video

depicting rape scenes and sexual torture and the defendants posted graphic descriptions of the material on the web sites. The obscene videos were mailed through the U.S. mails from locations within the Northern District of Texas, or distributed through a collection of web sites managed from the Northern District of Texas and elsewhere, which enabled customers in the United States and throughout the world, to download obscene digital video images or to view digital streaming video. Customers of the forbiddenvideos.com web site, or related web sites, would place orders and pay for the obscene material with a credit card.

The defendants' website operation was identified during an investigation into similar activities of Garry Layne Ragsdale and his wife, Tamara Michelle Ragsdale. Gartman and the Ragsdales were partners in a business distributing obscene videos until a dispute arose between them in early 1998 which dissolved the partnership. The Ragsdales were convicted in federal court in Dallas on October 23, 2003 on obscenity charges related to the obscene video business they conducted after their partnership with Gartman ended. Garry Ragsdale was sentenced on March 5, 2004 by Judge Sidney A. Fitzwater to 33 months in prison. Tamara Ragsdale was sentenced by Judge Fitzwater on the same day to 30 months in prison.

An indictment is an accusation by a federal grand jury and a defendant is entitled to the presumption of innocence unless proven guilty. If convicted on all counts, however, Clarence Thomas Gartman and Brent Alan McDowell each face a maximum statutory sentence of 20 years imprisonment and a \$750,000 fine. Lou Anthony Santilena faces a maximum statutory sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a \$500,000 fine.

U. S. Attorney Boyle praised the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Dallas Police Department Vice Squad. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Linda C. Groves and DOJ Child Exploitation Obscenity Section Trial Attorney Richard D. Green.